Lat 39.54312 Lon -120.31524

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File Code: 3420 **Date:** April 13, 2000

Subject: Hazard trees in Cold Creek Campground (NE00-12)

To: District Ranger, Sierraville RD, Tahoe NF

On March 9th, at the request of Rachel Condon, District Sale Administrator I examined approximately fifteen old growth Jeffrey pine trees and several white fir trees in Cold Creek Campground for defects that make trees hazardous. Rachel found a significant amount of rotting wood in old fire scars on some old growth Jeffrey pine and requested an assessment of the hazard presented by the trees. Mary Westmoreland and Rick Maddalena from the Truckee RD accompanied Rachel and I for this assessment because Mary and Rick oversee the recreation in this campground.

Three large (>48" dbh) Jeffrey pine trees, two with heart rot and one with an extreme amount of lean toward the toilets, were identified as hazardous. One smaller mature Jeffrey pine with approximately two thirds of the cambium killed by an old basal injury, and a mature white fir with crown dieback and cambium kill were also determined to be hazardous. These five hazard trees were identified for removal by Rick, Mary, Rachel and me. In addition, defects such as two large forks on one Jeffrey pine and many large dead branches on others were identified. One large broken branch is hung up in a large Jeffrey pine and was recognized as needing removal. As a reminder, when removing the hazard trees, it is Regional policy to treat all freshly cut conifer stumps in recreation areas with Sporax to prevent annosus root disease from entering the roots and infecting the remaining trees.

The hazard trees were identified using, for a guide, the publication "Long-Range Planning for Developed Sites in the Pacific Northwest: the Context of Hazard Tree Management." (PNW Publication # FPM-TP039-92). Mary and Rachel were given copies of this publication on an earlier date. In addition, a battery-powered drill with an 11-inch-long bit was used to locate wood decay inside the trees and to help decide if the trees are hazardous.

As pointed out in 'Long-Range Planning', it is important to have ongoing hazard tree management programs for developed sites. Moreover, vegetation in each developed site should be managed using a site-specific long-range plan developed collaboratively with managers, the public and an interdisciplinary teams of specialists (recreation, silviculture, insect and disease, cultural resources, engineering, etc.).

As discussed during our visit to Cold Creek Campground, overstocked groups of 50 to 100-year-old trees can be thinned to increase tree vigor and resistance to insect and disease disturbances. Most of these young trees are an anomaly. They would not have survived natural recurring underburns that were, for the most part, eliminated during the last century by our fire suppression. The fire scars on the old pines are testimony to the fire history of this area. One need only to mentally visualize this campground with only the largest conifers, to know what this forest looked like prior to Forest Service management.

Historically, resilient open-grown conifers were able survive natural disturbances such as insects and diseases, weather and fire, better than the crowded trees that are now present. By retaining all the younger conifers in Cold Creek Campground for visual screening we are setting up many of them, as well as many of the old-growth overstory trees, to future drought stress. Once stressed, these trees will be potential targets for bark beetle attacks that can kill them.

By heavily thinning the trees in and around the Cold Creek Campground and maintaining a much lower stocking in the future, the resilience of the trees will be improved and the younger trees will grow big sooner, so that they can replace the present old-growth trees as they die or become hazardous. Whereas visual screening from densely stocked trees may be desirable in the short run, the value of maintaining for the long run, the presence of large healthy trees in the campground and the resulting pleasure of camping in their midst is priceless. Revenues from periodically removing timber can be used to offset some of the cost of maintaining the trees and facilities in the campground.

Due to the snow on the ground and the urgency to identify and remove the most serious tree hazards before summer, a thorough hazard tree survey was not completed. This still needs to be done, and all identified tree hazards should be removed or mitigated before campers arrive this year. Guides for thoroughly surveying for tree hazards, for setting up a comprehensive hazard tree management program, and for preparing a vegetation management plan are provided in 'Long-Range Planning'. If you wish further assistance, please contact me at (530) 252-6680 (voicemail) or wwoodruff@fs.fed.us (IBM) if you have any questions or requests.

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Plant Pathologist, NE California FPM

cc: Rachel Condon
Mary Westmoreland
Rick Maddelina